THE

DRAMATIC CENSOR;

OR,

Weekly Theatrical Report.

NUMBER IX.

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 1800.

——— *Quae vos fortuna quietos*
Sollicitat, suadetque ignota lacessere bella ?

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Luctificam Alecto dirarum ab sede sororum,
Infernisque ciet tenebris, cui tristia bella,
Iraeque, insidiæque, et crimina noxia cordi.

DRAMATIC WRITERS, who desire to have an EARLY Review of their Publications, are requested to send a Copy to the Editor, at JUSTINS's Printing-Office, Pemberton Row, Gough Square.

DRURY-LANE, FRIDAY, *Feb.* 21, 1800.

PIZARRO—*Sheridan.* OF AGE TO-MORROW.

COVENT-GARDEN, FRIDAY, *Feb.* 21, 1800.

SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* TRUE FRIENDS—*Dibdin.*

WITHOUT retracting in the slightest degree the opinion we gave in our last, respecting the merits and character of the New Entertainment, we proceed to the fulfilment of our *conditional* promise, to present our readers with a sketch of the plot.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Durano, - - - - - -	Mr. Murray.
Juan, - - - - - - -	Mr. Davenport.
Carlos, - - - - - -	Mr. Incledon.
Father Dominico, - -	Mr. Johnstone.
Olla Podrida, - - - -	Mr. Emery.
Binnacle, - - - - - -	Mr. Townsend.
Jacomo, - - - - - -	Mr. Simmons.
Theodora, - - - - - -	Mrs. H. Johnston.
Beatrice, - - - - - -	Mrs. Dibdin.
Duenna, - - - - - -	Mrs. Davenport.

The scene is laid in Spain. *Durano* and *Juan*, from whose intimate friendship the piece derives its title, had embarked with their families on a voyage, but were shipwrecked. The two friends, however, have the good fortune to escape a *watery grave*, (though ignorant of each other's preservation) and with his own, *Durano* saves the life of *Theodora*, the daughter of his friend. *Juan* is equally successful in rescuing *Carlos*, the son of *Durano*. Each thinks himself, and his adopted child, the sole survivors. The infants are brought up by both parties as their *own*, and in this error they continue, till the very day when the occurrences of the play are supposed to take place.

After a separation of many years, *Juan* arrives at *Durano's* residence. *Carlos*, previous to a recognition between the two friends, rescues *Durano* from the hands of assassins. In the scuffle he receives a cut in the arm, which is followed up by a much deeper wound in the *heart*—He sees, and instantly falls

falls in love with *Theodora:* the lady is as much smitten with him. As usual in such cases, the parties play at *cross purposes*; but an explanation soon removes all obstacles, and the lovers are united.

The rest of the *dramatis personæ* have very little connexion with the plot. *Father Dominico* is an Irish friar, whom *Olla Podrida*, a jealous cook, suspects of being too intimate with his wife, *Beatrice*. *Binnacle* is a drunken sailor, introduced for no other purpose than to serve as a *trap* to the galleries. As the circumstance of the *shipwreck* is the leading incident on which the piece hinges, the author might easily have heightened the interest of his drama, by making *Binnacle* instrumental in saving the life of *Carlos*. *Jacomo* is a stupid old steward, who blunders with so aukward a grace, that his mistakes appear rather the result of *design*, than *chance* and *dotage*. To atone for the dullness of his piece, and counteract the natural workings of dislike, the author stuffs a few popular sentiments into his dialogue, and abuses *John Bull's* partiality to the gallant *tars* of his country, to make nonsense and insipidity go down. Hacknied as is this practice of appealing to the feelings of the audience, it becomes doubly disgusting, when employed to entrap applause to a composition, which cannot even lay claim to the praise of *mediocrity*, and which stands solely indebted to the puerile charms of *singsong* for the disgraceful existence it is suffered to *linger out*. When we contemplate this subject, we

cannot refrain from experiencing surprise at the fate of Mr. LINLEY's late unsuccessful Musical Entertainment. The Pavillion, *alias*, The Ring, with all its sins upon its head, possessed a fairer title to indulgence. We do not mean to arraign the *condemnation* of Mr. LINLEY's production, but only to express our astonishment and regret, that a similar verdict was not *returned*; or, we should rather say, *carried into execution*, (for *sentence of death* certainly *was* passed upon these *True Friends* by the public tribunal) in the present case.

It is a circumstance which ought not to be passed over unnoticed, as it affords no mean proof of the justice of our remarks, that the *news-papers* (great and powerful as is the *sinister influence* under which they act) concurred, with very few exceptions, in deprecating the new entertainment. What must be the character of a *sing-song* After-piece which *this* class of critics can prevail upon themselves to *condemn!* The self-dubbed *Oracle*, indeed, of the 20th instant, had the effrontery to assure its readers, that "*True Friends* had a just claim to the *friendship* of the public, (the *Oracle*, in its attempts at *wit*, never gets beyond a *pun*) not only from its name, but from the *sprightliness* of the dialogue." That venal, that arrogant, that ill-written paper, the *Times*, with equal profligacy, extols the *humour* with which the piece (in the estimation of the Editor) *abounds!*

[The continuation of our *Analysis* of Mr. MORTON's new Comedy, is unavoidably postponed, to make room for our Strictures on the late publication of the Covent-Garden Committee of Performers.]

DRURY-

DRURY-LANE, SATURDAY, *Feb.* 22, 1800.

THE CASTLE SPECTRE—*M. G. Lewis.* OF AGE TO-MORROW.

A new performer, of the name of YATES, made her *debut* this evening on the boards of Drury-Lane, in the character of *Angela*. Her reception was highly flattering, and (making due allowance for the embarrassment of a *first* * appearance) proportion-

* Strictly speaking, we are not warranted in the use of this term, as Mrs. YATES has performed before a London audience, prior to her this evening's experiment. *Andromache*, we believe, is the character in which she some years ago, appeared at Covent-Garden. The *Haymarket Theatre*, likewise, has more than once furnished her with an opportunity of making an essay of her abilities. We conceive ourselves, however, authorized to regard her *debut* at Drury-Lane, in the light of a *first* appearance, as it was attended with all those concomitancies, which characterize a *maiden* effort. Her embarrassment and trepidation evidently precluded a full and fair exertion of her powers. She frequently stood in need of encouragement, which was kindly given, when most wanted, by the representative of *Alice*, and as kindly received by the lady to whom that encouragement was addressed. The stake she had at issue, was of primary importance. On the event of that evening depended, in a great measure, all her professional hopes. A widow, under circumstances peculiarly afflicting, (our readers, no doubt, recollect the murder of Lieutenant YATES, of Pimlico,) with an infant family to provide for; it may well be supposed, that her anxiety experienced no inconsiderable augmentation from maternal tenderness and solicitude. Her whole manner and style of acting, if we had no other grounds for our opinion, plainly evinced, that her feelings are tremblingly alive to the voice of nature.

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ate to her deserts. She possesses natural advantages which do not fall to the lot of the commonality. The cast of her features bear a strong, but pleasing resemblance to the favoured daughter of *Melpomene**. Her voice is sweet, and capable of great modulation; though, it must be confessed, she frequently failed in the exertion of it. But for this partial defect, modesty and diffidence offer a competent apology. The solid proofs of professional worth and merit, to wit, just conception and correct delineation of character, were discernable in the whole style and tenor of her performance. In the superior walks of Tragedy, she promises to be an acquisition to the Theatre. Her figure is striking, and calculated to give dignity to sentiment. In this particular, she surpasses her predecessors in the part of *Angela*; nor do we feel the slightest apprehensions of committing ourselves, when we add, that she frequently called forth beauties, which, in previous representations had escaped notice. Though we never can permit *private* feelings to warp our *public* judgment, we make no pretensions to that *stoicism* and *apathy* of soul, which can behold maternal love triumphant in its endeavours to solace an infant family, without experiencing the liveliest emotions of joy.

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* Mrs. Siddons.

COVENT-

COVENT-GARDEN, SATURDAY, *Feb.* 22, 1800.

SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* TRUE FRIENDS—*Dibdin.*

WERE we ambitious of *punning* celebrity, we might imitate the practice of *news-paper* witlings, and observe, that Mr. MORTON's Plough bids fair to produce a bountiful harvest to the treasury of Covent Garden.

DRURY-LANE, MONDAY, *Feb.* 24, 1800.

AS YOU LIKE IT—*Shakspeare.* OF AGE TO-MORROW.

MR. DIGNUM resumed his functions this evening as a performer, for the first* time since his late alarming indisposition. The relapse of the worthy and respected Manager of this Theatre, Mr. AICKIN, excites in us the deepest regret. Mr. POWELL was his substitute as the representative of the *Duke.*

The part of *Rosalind* was very ably sustained by Miss BIGGS. We must, however, take the liberty of animadverting on a certain *habit* which this lady has acquired, of adjusting her dress, and *fiddle-faddling*, (there is sometimes much energy in a *common* expression) in the midst of a speech replete with interest and pathos. Such *unseasonable* attention to *perſonal* attractions, produces a prejudicial effect;

* Mr. DIGNUM joined the band the last time the Royal family visited Drury-Lane; but this evening is the date of his first appearance in a *character.*

which

which, if it does not totally destroy, at least weakens the illusion of scenic representation.

COVENT-GARDEN, MONDAY, *Feb.* 24, 1800.
SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* RAYMOND AND AGNES—*Farley.*

THE Proprietors of Covent-Garden Theatre, have long *sown in hope*—witness, *The Wise Man of the East*; and *Joanna of Montfaucon*—they now begin to *reap in joy*.

DRURY-LANE, TUESDAY, *Feb.* 25, 1800.
PIZARRO—*Sheridan.* OF AGE TO-MORROW.

THE two Theatres, with respect to their Entertainment, may now be said to rival each other in folly and profligacy.

COVENT-GARDEN, TUESDAY, *Feb.* 25, 1800.
SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* TRUE FRIENDS—*Dibdin.*

☞ The THEATRES, according to custom, were shut up on ASH-WEDNESDAY.]

DRURY-LANE, THURSDAY, *Feb.* 27, 1800.
PIZARRO—*Sheridan.* OF AGE TO-MORROW.

COVENT-GARDEN, THURSDAY, *Feb.* 27, 1800.
SPEED THE PLOUGH—*Morton.* THE IRISH MIMIC—*O'Keefe.*

MR. MORTON'S New Comedy was honoured this evening, for the second time, with the visit of the Royal family. The Entertainment afforded them much food for laughter.

THEATRICAL

THEATRICAL CRITICISM, &c.

Involving a candid Investigation of the Pamphlet, entitled,

"A STATEMENT OF THE DIFFERENCES SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE PROPRIETORS AND * PERFORMERS OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT-GARDEN."

Given in the Correspondence that has passed between them.

Ac veluti magno in populo cum sæpe coorta est
Seditio, sævitque animis ignobile† vulgus,
Jamque faces et saxa volant, furor arma ministrat:
Tum pietate gravem ac meritis si forte virum quem
Conspexere, silent, arrectisque auribus adstant.
Ille regit dictis animos, et pectora mulcet.

By referring to pages 57 and 58, of the Dramatic Censor, our Readers will perceive, that we formally disclaimed, as circumstances *then* stood, all interference in the dispute between the Managers

* As it does not appear that *all*, nor yet the *major part* of the company have given their sanction to this publication, and the line of conduct pursued by the *mal-contents*, modesty might have suggested the propriety of not magnifying a *part* into the *whole*. Instead of stiling themselves the *Performers at large*, they might have been contented with writing *some* of the Performers; or, κατ' ἐξοχὴν, the *Eight Leading and Principal Performers*, whose names are hereunto annexed. But no doubt they are aware, that *pars, pro toto*, is a rhetorical figure. Thus Virgil, for instance, names the *hoof*, or *nethermost* part, when he means the *whole body* of that noble animal the horse:

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit UNGULA *campum.*

† Probably an exception may be taken to this term by the complainants. They, as we are expressly informed by themselves, (page 2, of their Statement) are not the *ignobile vulgus*, but the *Leading* and *Principal* Performers of the Theatre.

and *some* of the Performers of Covent-Garden Theatre. Our motives for this forbearance were, as we expressly stated, a reluctance to widen the breach between the two parties, by a *premature* disclosure of facts, whilst the chance existed of putting an end to the controversy, by amicable adjustment. Even now, that all hopes of friendly arbitration have ceased, we should scrupulously have avoided all discussion respecting the merits of a question, actually *pending*, and in a train of enquiry, if the Performers, on their part, had manifested a similar sense of propriety, and been contented to wait with silent deference the final award of that tribunal to which their claims have been referred. But as the performers, by their printed *Appeal to the Public*, have trespassed, voluntarily trespassed, against that system of *etiquette*, which we prescribed for our own rule of conduct, we no longer conceive ourselves bound by delicacy, to abstain from canvassing their pretensions. Our reasons for entering on this investigation cannot fail to meet their perfect approbation, originating, as they do, in the same identical source which (if they are sincere in their professions*) influenced their own conduct, *viz.* an "anxious wish that they should appear to the world *in their true garb!*"

Before we, however, proceed to our intended enquiry, it may be proper to observe, that we stand

* See *Supplement* to their *Statement*, &c. page 3.

totally

totally *isolated* and detached from either party. We have had no communication, directly or indirectly, with either the Proprietors, or the Performers; but are ourselves responsible for every assertion we advance. No individual, we are persuaded, who is personally acquainted with the character of the Editor of the DRAMATIC CENSOR, will accuse him of a disposition to *side with power*; and the very expressions he made use of in his anticipation of an event he then hoped to see accomplished, but which he now laments to find impracticable, viz. *an amicable adjustment*:—" Whilst we admit, that the Performers have made out, in many respects, a strong plea of grievances*, we entertain no doubt but the liberality and justice of the Managers, will induce them to offer adequate compensation and redress:" afford sufficient evidence, that he did not direct his attention to the dispute in question, under the influence of any unfavourable or hostile impressions against the *complaining* party.

If, therefore, in the course of the following Strictures, the writer should appear to have altered his

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* What those *actual* grievances were, in the estimation of the Editor, will appear in the sequel. It must, however, be remembered, that the words we quoted from the Second Number of the DRAMATIC CENSOR, were written on the authority of undigested representations, conveyed in a desultory and irregular form, which, from the very nature of things, precluded the possibility of that connected and comprehensive survey of the whole, and its parts, which a printed statement affords.

sentiments, in any particular, it is to the peculiar circumstances of the case, as detailed by the Performers in their *own* statement, that this change is to be ascribed. And surely, when we take into consideration the natural disposition of mankind, to give as favourable a colouring as possible to their own story, it cannot be deemed the best argument in support of the justice of an appeal, that the Complainant's own Report should condemn him. Even in the direct reverse of this case, we know the necessity of attending to the good old maxim of—*hearing both sides of the question.*

Having thus discussed the needful preliminaries, we proceed to an immediate investigation of the merits of the controversy; in the appreciation of which we shall adopt the *analytical* method, as best calculated to put the Reader in complete possession of the several grounds and *data*, on which the dispute hinges, and thereby to direct the judgment in forming a just decision and award.

The *Statement* commences with an *Advertisement*, setting forth the motives which induced them to lay their grievances before the public. As the redress of these grievances (supposing them, for the sake of argument, to be solid and well-founded) does not appear to rest with the public, we may be allowed to question the *prudence* and *utility* of a procedure, which tends only to irritate and inflame the angry passions of the heart, and split the town into factions. For surely, it is not by such a line of conduct,

duct, that they can hope to influence in their favour that "*quarter, where decision must legally follow opinion.*" And as to any other sort of interference than the law allows of, we entertain too high an opinion of the good sense of these gentlemen, to imagine they could harbour the wish, even for a moment, to effect their purpose by *working on the effervescence of the public mind.* We will, therefore, acquit them of any sinister design of this nature, and waving likewise the question of *prudence*, take it for granted, that they really, and *bona fide*, acted from the motives they themselves assign, *viz.* a wish to guard against prejudication and misconstruction.

But here they must give us leave to dispute the justice of the passage, which asserts that their statement "*equally furnishes the arguments of the Proprie-*
"*tors with their own.*" The whole tenor of their publication, though we give them credit for the *temper* with which it is drawn up, evidently labours (it is not indeed in human nature to act otherwise) to make good their own cause, with little attention to the arguments in favour of the Proprietors, which are but very *scantily* interspersed in the voluminous detail of their own grounds of justification. It would be superfluous to ask them, how they would approve of having their own suit so *ably* and so *fully* defended? And when they tell us, that partial and garbled accounts of the dispute had been promulgated by the Proprietors, are we to believe that the

mal-contents

mal-contents were totally *silent* on *their* part? That no communications on the subject were made to *their* friends and connexions, through *their* agency, and with *their* concurrence? Unless they can answer this charge in the *negative*, we see no reason why the litigation should be obtruded upon the public by the Performers, in preference to the Proprietors.

The reader is next presented with a brief historical sketch of the transactions, which gave umbrage to the *mal-contents*, and the steps pursued by them in return, to obtain a redress of their alledged grievances. It appears, that prior to the opening of the Theatre for the present season, a circular letter had been delivered to the Performers, apprising them of an advance of Twenty Pounds in the charge for a Benefit; as likewise, that in future only three weeks notice would be given of the appointment of a Benefit. This letter is signed by RICHARD HUGHES, the Treasurer to the Covent-Garden Theatre, and bears date, July 26, 1799.

Essentially connected and interwoven with the advance of their *benefit charges*, is their next subject of complaint, *viz.* the restrictions imposed, from the commencement of the present season, on the issue of orders. This latter circumstance is a consideration of great importance to a performer, *orders* being, to speak metaphorically, the seed which an actor sows *with a liberal hand*, and on which his chief hopes of a *plentiful harvset* on his benefit-night are founded. Other restraints are stated to have

taken

taken place, which in their collective operations, militated considerably against their comfort. But, as the *mal-contents* have not thought proper to go into a detail of these secondary grievances, we are relieved from the necessity of following them through this part of the argument.

We are then told that *some* of the Principal Performers agreed to assemble, for the purpose of "taking into consideration in what manner their complaints could be expressed with the greatest *propriety*." In making *propriety* an object of their attention, in the outset of their career, they certainly are entitled to some credit. In how far they *adhered* to this principle in the progress of their proceedings, will form the topic of speedy enquiry.

The Eight *principal* Performers, whose names are annexed to the publication, viz. *Messrs. Johnstone, Holman, Pope, Incledon, Munden, Fawcett, Knight,* and *H. E. Johnston,* met accordingly to arrange their plan of attack. With a degree of generosity and fellow-feeling, which reflects the highest honour on their already illustrious names, they resolved, not merely to fight their own battles, but to be the *Knights-Errant,* or *Red-Cross Knights* (if they prefer the latter title), of the whole theatrical commonwealth. The first step they took was to create themselves, by * *self-election,* the agents and representatives

* Their own words (page 2) fully warrant the inference we have here drawn: "As the number specified comprized a majority of

sentatives of the *body at large*. Now, as we have no documents, not even the *ipse-dixits* of these *Leading Performers*, these *Fac-totums* and *Directors General* of the *Thespian Republic*, to prove, that this meeting and *self-appointment* took place at the request and instance of the theatrical body at large, we cannot but regard their mode of procedure in a very suspicious light, as savouring strongly, both in theory and in practice, of those principles to which certain *self-commissioned* men in power, in a neighbouring country, owe their sudden rise and greatness. We have ever been averse to the obtrusion of politics in theatrical concerns; but, in the present instance, we cannot refrain from observing, that the very worst features of the two extremes appear, to us, to be blended in the constitution of this professional *Junto*. When *leading men* usurp an official and *diplomatic* situation of this nature, their union may be compared to a *democratical* superstructure, erected on the base of *Aristocracy*. What good effects are likely to result to those, whom they affect to patronize and to protect, from such an incongruous assimilation, experience has already but too plainly demonstrated!

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of the *Leading* Performers of the Theatre, it was thought sufficient to accomplish every purpose desirable to *the body at large*." That Mr. HARRIS, and the rest of the Proprietors, considered their conduct in this respect precisely in the same light, is evident from the repeated refusal to recognize them as a *Committee*, or a *Deputation*; as well as from their own contumacy, in rejecting all overtures of *individual* redress.

The

The institution of this *Directory*, we are inform took place towards the close of November last. Four members were *delegated* to wait on Mr. HARRIS the next morning, and apprize him of the result of their deliberations. Mr. HARRIS, according to their own statement, received them with great affability; and, at his desire, a memorandum of their alledged grievances was transmitted, which embraced the three several heads, of *Orders*, the increased charges of a Benefit, and the advance of the Fine for refusing any part or character, from Five Pounds to Thirty.

These three articles, therefore, may justly be considered as the leading points, concerning which the Proprietors and the *mal-contents* are at variance. We find a *fourth* subject of complaint started in the sequel, respecting the deductions made for bodily incapacity, and absence from duty, originating in illness; a topic, on which we shall not neglect to offer a few remarks in the proper place. Mr. HARRIS replied to their remonstrance, by denying the claim of Performers to *Orders*, as a matter of *right*; but at the same time expressly declares, " that the Proprietors are heartily disposed (see page 5) to make that *indulgence* * as accommodating

* We shall, in due time, consider the question, in how far Actors are entitled to Orders as a *claim of right*; or in how far Orders are to be considered as a *privilege of indulgence*, necessarily liable to restrictions and modifications, according to the varying circumstances of the concerns of a Theatre.

as may be to the Performers; that the Proprietors have no intention of curtailing that *indulgence:* on the contrary, they mean that Orders shall be allowed to be current *at least as frequently* as has been the practice hertofore," &c.

Mr. HARRIS then proceeds to vindicate the increased charge of Twenty Pounds to the Performers on their Benefit nights. After observing, that such charge has "ever been regulated by the actual expenditure of the Theatre, and that the Treasurer of the Theatre is ready to make declaration, that the present rate of charge is much *under* the nightly expences incurred by the Proprietors," he reminds them of the enlarged dimensions of the Theatre, with the augmented price of admission, which more than compensate for the additional expences incurred by the Performers.

On the subject of the advanced Fine for refusing a character, Mr. HARRIS offers a very satisfactory and practical explanation:—"The same was established (he writes, page 6,) at the end of the season previous to the last, *without a murmur*; many of you allowed the necessity of it; the *good effect* of it has been notorious, for not a *single fine* has been imposed since the present sum was established, on any one individual in the company."

Mr. HARRIS then, very properly concludes with a firm avowal of his resolve, to resist the applications of a *self-created junto.* He wants no *self-appointed delegates, no self-elected corresponding, or executive*

tive committees, no self-commissioned deputies, no representatives without constituents, in his company. At the same time, he assures the eight *mal-contents* of his readiness to hear and redress their grievances *individually*; for as a *body*, these eight are certainly, both in the eye of *law* and *reason*, a *non-entity*. His declaration runs thus:—" And now, gentlemen, I must beg leave to declare to you, that as a *committee*, or a *deputation*, I will henceforward know nothing of you. Every Performer is bound only by his own specific agreement, as to the above memorandums, as well as all other claims and conditions, and has no pretence of *interfering with the rest*." He adds—" I trust it is needless for me to say, I have been, and ever will be, ready to listen to the complaint, and to redress the wrongs of every *individual*; and I remain happy in the conviction, that every one of you, *disjunctively*, knows me to be his assured friend and servant."—This mild and conciliatory letter, is dated Nov. 30, 1799.

The *mal-contents*, in their reply, persist in their determination to maintain their *usurped representative character*. They intreat Mr. HARRIS to rescind his determination of shutting his ears to the remonstrances of a *community* (by this time they unquestionably refer to their *collective* demands, as Mr. HARRIS had explicitly avowed his willingness to listen to *individual* expostulation); and, to induce a compliance with their wishes, very candidly inform him, that they have more *work for him in petto*, and

that other grievances, which they had "only hinted at," would be brought under discussion, as fast as he should consent to redress those already complained of.

Mr. HARRIS perceiving by the tenor of this note, that he had to deal with men who would readily *take an ell for every inch* he might feel disposed to concede, declines entering into fresh explanations, and therefore refers them to the resolutions contained in his last. He, however, repeats his promise of lending a patient ear to *individual* remonstrances. "I repeat again (page 9), that if any *individual* among you, has any just complaint respecting *himself*, I am ready now, and always, to *hear* and to *redress* it; but to any *committee*, or its *deputation*, I will reply no more; being well assured, from an experience of a Theatre for thirty years, (and indeed your last letter confirms the obvious truth) that in such a body *imaginary* grievances will arise continually and eternally.

The next article of correspondence, is a very friendly letter from Mr. LEWIS, (who prudently waves the ceremony of addressing himself to a *junto* of complainants, whom, as a *body*, he cannot recognize,) to Mr. MUNDEN, stating his concern, that uneasiness should have been given to his friends by some necessary regulations in the *subordinate* departments of the theatre. These, he assures them, shall be immediately redressed, if they will transmit a specification for his inspection.

To

To this friendly epistle Mr. MUNDEN replies, in the name of the *collective* body of *mal-contents*, that they have nothing more at heart than to terminate their differences by an amicable adjustment. But, in the true spirit of modern reformers, they will not accept even of redress, *but on their own terms!* They must be allowed, forsooth, to *dictate* and *prescribe* the manner, in which they will condescend to receive the grant they solicit! They will not even deign to specify the *inferior** complaints they keep *in petto*, as a *corps de reserve*, for some future occa-

* The cause of this reluctance to enter on the discussion of their *inferior* complaints is obvious. These haughty *benefit mendicants*, these *leading* performers of the Theatre, (whose ambition aspires *to lead the Proprietors by the nose*) have not so completely imbibed the spirit of *Knight Errantry*, as to fight the battles of *others* without any regard to *self-interest*. "The Age of Chivalry" (as the late Mr. BURKE so pathetically deplored) is truly and irreparably lost for ever. The *inferior* grievances, or to use the language of Mr. LEWIS, —"the necesary regulations in the inferior departments of the Theatre"—are objects of too *trifling* a nature to merit *their* attention. Such grievances can only be supposed to affect the *common herd*, *the swinish multitude*, not the *principal* Performers of the Theatre. These *self-appointed Agents*, therefore, these *self-elected Representatives* of the *body at large*, think it needless to bestow a single thought on this point, till they have carried their own. Such is the disinterested fellow feeling; such the sincerity and patriotism of *mal-content delegates*; and such the cordiality of co-operation, which their humble but deluded abettors must ever expect to experience from their concurrence. Æsop tells us a pleasant story of a compassionate *Goat*, which accommodated a *Fox*, that had tumbled into a well, with the use of her horns to climb out; but when the *Goat* called upon the *Fox* to return the obligation, she only got laughed at for her pains. We leave it to the parties concerned to make the application.

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sion, till their more *imperious* demands have been complied with. Mr. LEWIS is therefore apprized, that he must expect no explanation on the subject of his note, till he has *deserved* this courtesy at their hands, by acceding to their more important and momentous requisitions. This is not the *first* time,

si fas est magnis componere parva,

that *unauthorized delegates* have used this tone of language.

Such a *cavalier* reply scarcely merited even the *verbal* answer which Mr. LEWIS returned, stating, that "on the points expressed in the *memorandum* presented to Mr. HARRIS, he agreed with the rest of the proprietors."

The *negotiation* (these *delegates* have a wonderful itch to ape the politician: perhaps, they consider their *negotiations* with the Proprietors of Covent-Garden Theatre, as a parallel to Lord MALMSBURY's equally unsuccesful negotiations at *Lisle:* they have been long in the habit of personating Lords, Dukes, Ambassadors, Kings, and Emperors, on the boards) with Mr. LEWIS, being thus abruptly terminated, the *mal-contents* make another effort to renew the *negotiations*, by telling Mr. HARRIS what they told him before, that they had strong objections to urge their complaints *individually*, as they saw less chance of carrying their point by their own *separate* efforts, than by a *combination*. The copy of this letter, it seems, is lost, to the great regret of the *diplomatic* world, as it may be supposed to have contained some

some very curious and instructive specimens of *ambidexterity* and *finesse*, in the art, mystery, and science, of *negotiation*.

Four of the eight *mal-contents* are then *delegated* to wait upon Mr. HUGHES, the Treasurer, and require information respecting the *truth* of Mr. HARRIS's assertion in his first letter, that the present charge of a *Benefit* (viz. one hundred and forty pounds) is much under the nightly expence. The Treasurer not being prepared to give them immediate satisfaction on this point, transmits the necessary information, in writing, to the following effect—"I have, by direction of Mr. HARRIS, made an *accurate* calculation of the nightly expences of the Theatre, and find that it exceeds, *very considerably*, the sum of one hundred and sixty pounds per night."

With this answer the *mal-contents*, in a subsequent letter, profess themselves greatly dissatisfied. They expected (as we find in page 48) a *chandler's shop* account of the minutest *items* of expence, which the Treasurer, in his reply, informs them was deemed unreasonable by the Proprietors, and probably beneath the dignity of the profession, *in general*, much more the *representative* body of that profession. As the Performers did not second their request, for a specification of the several *items* of the charge placed to their account, with any reasons for doubting the *truth* of the Treasurer's assertion, "that the nightly expences of the Theatre actually did considerably exceed the sum of one hundred and six pounds"—

we

we can see no cause, why Mr. HUGHES's veracity should be insidiously impeached, and the *detail* required, where the gross amount of the charge stands uncontradicted.

Mr. HUGHES then proceeds to state the grounds, on which the Proprietors conceive themselves justified in raising the expences of a *Benefit* to the Performers. "The enlarged dimensions of the Theatre, and the advancement in the price of admission, (they contend) are much more than an equivalent for the unavoidable increased charge of a Benefit." Having before assured the Performers, on the authority of their Treasurer, (who, as we find in the sequel, offered to substantiate the truth of his statement *on oath*) that the nightly expences *did* considerably exceed the sum of one hundred and sixty pounds, we must candidly confess, that to us it appears both just and reasonable, that an alteration in the Theatre, attended with much additional expence to the Proprietors, and productive of much additional emolument to the Performer who takes a benefit, should make an additional *item* (these *leading* Performers, it will be remembered, have shown themselves very partial to *items*) of charge.

In proof of the advantages they have gained from the enlarged dimensions of the Theatre, as well as to show how little cause they have for complaint in general, in a *pecuniary* point of view, a statement follows of the Benefit receipts of last season, the salary allotted to each of the eight *mal-contènts*, and

their

their *clear* receipts, after deducting the charges of their Benefit nights. From this statement it appears, that Mr. INCLEDON receives for his voice, during the season, the *ſmall* income of eight hundred and eighty-eight pounds fourteen shillings and two-pence; Mr. HOLMAN, *only* five hundred and seventeen pounds fourteen shillings and two-pence; Mr. POPE, including his wife's wages, *no more* than nine hundred and sixty-five pounds and four-pence; Mr. MUNDEN is obliged to put up with eight hundred and sixty-eight pounds six shillings; Mr. FAWCETT is *ſtinted* to seven hundred and sixty-one pounds two shillings and six-pence; Mr. H. JOHNSTON, including his wife's services, has only eight hundred and seventeen pounds two shillings, to enable him to struggle with the hard times we live in; Mr. J. JOHNSTONE, has six hundred and fifty pounds seventeen shillings and two-pence, scarcely enough to buy him a *mealy potatoe!* and Mr. KNIGHT must shift as well as he can, with his poor five hundred and sixty-six pounds sixteen shillings.

The concluding part of this letter is so highly interesting, and replete with information, that we feel ourselves called upon to give it in the writer's own words.

" As to the *Fine* for refusing a character, (another cause of complaint with these distressed *mal-contents*) I have heard and believe, that much disgust has been given to authors, and much injury has been sustained by the property by the rejection of characters: notwithstanding which, Mr. HARRIS is perfectly correct in saying he

has never at any time, directed a single fine to be levied on * either of the complaining parties; and, as I believe, not more than four or five, during the fourteen years I have been in the treasury.

" The proprietors say—that 'orders have ever been held as a gratuitous indulgence.' I have never heard of any kind of pretence or claim of right of orders; on the contrary, they have never been allowed on any night, without special leave of the manager: and when orders have been sent without such permission, they have been either stopped at the doors, or the amount of them deducted out of the salary of the performer so offending against the established usage of the Theatre.

" And now gentlemen, as a friend not only to my employer, but to the Theatre in general, give me leave, most earnestly to entreat you to put an end to the present *cabal* in the Theatre and to give over vainly endeavouring, by *threats* and other means†, to prevail on

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* Occasion will shortly present for naming one of these *oppressed* gentlemen, who, for nearly a month, took his twelve pounds per week, without doing the smallest service to the Theatre. And for this *lucrative idleness* he was indebted to his capricious refusal of a part in *Lovers Vows!* Surely some regulations in the *Fines* may be thought necessary, when, as the case formerly stood, an actor, by paying five pounds for the refusal of a part in a play likely to have a *run*, might acquire leisure to earn ten times that sum, in addition to his continued salary.

† The Performers in their reply, page 58, deny that they have ever employed threats to intimidate others to join in their *cabal*. As the assertion of one man, till refuted, ought to weigh as much as that of another, we think it our duty to state this flat contradiction of Mr. HUGHES's accusation; without, however, taking upon ourselves to decide who may be in the wrong. It is proper to add, that the concluding words of the *mal-contents*—" Those who continue tamely to submit to oppression, in this land of freedom and of justice, are the objects of our *pity*, not our *threats*"—may suggest a surmise, that if not *menaces*, yet, perhaps, *contumely* and *opprobium* may have been employed, to increase the number of their partizans.

respectable

respectable actors to join in a combination which may probably end in *very serious consequences*; the simple question being no more than this—' whether the Theatre shall be *governed* and *controlled* by Eight Performers, each of them receiving, in *one* season, as above stated, on an average seven hundred and sixty pounds * per annum, *exclusive of his summer emoluments*; (how hardly these poor gentlemen are used!) † *sick* or *well*, *act* or *not act*, without risk of any sort? —Or, whether the management, with all its detailed regulations, should remain with the Proprietors, who, with the risk of an enormous capital, loaded with every sort of incumbrance, receive a profit very precarious, and depending altogether on conduct, good fortune, and the favour of the public?' (Signed)

25th Dec. 1799. " RICHARD HUGHES."

To this temperate, sensible, and friendly letter, are subjoined, by way of note, copies of the correspondence which passed between Mr. EDWARD BARLOW, on the part of the Proprietors, and two of the *mal-contents*, Mr. JOHN JOHNSTONE, and Mr. H. E. JOHNSTON. The former of these actors, who, we believe, is *not under articles*, is informed, that the Proprietors cannot retract the regulations respecting the advanced charge of twenty pounds, for Benefit expences; and that Orders are to be considered, what in fact they are, only as an act of cour-

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* As the salaries of Mrs. H. JOHNSTONE, and Mrs. POPE, are included in the sum total, on which this average is formed, it applies in strict fact, to *ten*, instead of *eight* Performers. But as the writer's aim is to show the ingratitude of these *mal-contents* towards their employers, he stands justified in bringing the emoluments their wives derive from the Theatre, into the account.

† This assertion is contradicted by the *mal-content* Performers—See page 60.

tesy, as an indulgence, not a right. He is then asked, whether " by combining himself with seven other Performers, *in the middle of a season*, for the avowed purpose of resisting the above regulations, he means to signify his intention of *withdrawing* himself (a very proper term for a Performer, whose engagement is only *durante bene placito*) from the Theatre at the expiration of the season?

To this question, Mr. JOHNSTONE returns the following evasive answer—

" SIR,

" As you put your question to me on *false premises*, (what those false premises are, Mr. JOHNSTONE does not condescend to inform us) I can make no answer to it."

From Mr. BARLOW's *uncontradicted* letter to Mr. H. E. JOHNSTON, it appears, that this Performer entered into articles so recently as July last year, with the *previous notice* of the advanced Fine for refusing a character, as likewise of the increased charge of a Benefit. He is therefore asked, whether his views in joining the cabal, are to get rid of " *certain* clauses in his said articles?" Or to be at liberty to " rescind them altogether?" Or, thirdly, Whether he aims at " extorting from the Proprietors, a right (never before heard of) of having free admissions into the Theatre?"—To these plain and pertinent questions, the gentleman returns an answer even more vague, oracular, and enigmatical, than his fellow mal-content—

SIR,

" SIR,

" I cannot answer your questions, as by the manner in which you ask them, you appear to take for granted, what has no foundation in truth."

The collective *junto* then add—" We *trust* (indeed the man who is not in the habit of *taking things on trust*, will find little proof and argument in their statement) the unjustifiable tenor of the above letters from Mr. BARLOW, is too obvious to need a comment." Whatever these *mal-contents* may please to think and *trust*, we, for our part, are of a very different opinion in this particular. We think some comment essentially and imperiously necessary. We would wish to ask, in how far is it consistent with justice, that a Performer, *not* under articles, and therefore at liberty to *withdraw* himself whenever he pleases, without incurring a penalty, should enter into a combination with other Performers, bound to the Theatre by articles, and therefore not equally free, without the concurrence of the other party, to quit the service, to resist regulations in which the interest of the Proprietors is deeply implicated? Still more would we wish to ask, whether an actor, who not six months before entered into articles with the Proprietors, is justified in joining a cabal, to oppose those very regulations, of which due and previous notice was given him, and to the faithful observance of which he freely, voluntarily; nay, we might say, eagerly subscribed? But, on this topic, we shall have a future opportunity to expatiate.

Here then, with the exception of a note from Mr.

Mr. HUGHES, relative to a *premature* promulgation of their case in the *Morning Post*, ends the *reciprocal* part of the correspondence. From the narrative we find, that a second *negotiation* was *opened* by Mr. LEWIS, (who appears to have been actuated by a sincere desire to restore harmony and good-will in the profession) but this, like the former, we are told, "ended without redress being offered to any subject of complaint." In the course of this *negotiation*, it was proposed, in order to silence the doubts and suspicions of the *mal-contents*, that the Treasurer should make an affidavit, that he told the truth, when he affirmed the nightly expences of the Theatre to amount to one hundred and sixty pounds. But even the solemnity of an oath was not sufficient to satisfy the minds of the complainants "Their reasons for conceiving that an *affidavit* could convey no conviction on the subject of *Benefit charges*," (a polite mode of telling a man that you suspect him capable of perjury) with various other circumstances necessary towards their justification, are then detailed in a voluminous letter of forty-eight pages, addressed to the man, whose AFFIDAVIT they will not trust, Mr. RICHARD HUGHES, the Treasurer.

But as this said letter, independent of its *bulk*, (which renders it impossible for the limits of our publication to enter into a competent *analysis* this week) abounds in false arguments, sophistry, and the grossest misrepresentations, which can have no

other

other tendency, than to *mislead* the public, and which, therefore, render a *full* and free exposure the more necessary—we shall postpone our *Strictures* on this part of their pamphlet till our next. Mean while, we shall briefly premise the leading grounds, on which we mean to vindicate the regulations adopted by the Proprietors, and resisted by the *mal-contents*.

We shall defend the increased *charges* of a *Benefit*; because, in the first place, we verily believe, that the increased *emoluments* of the Actor are more than commensurate to the additional expence. Secondly, because the grounds on which the *mal-contents* resist this claim, are not only fallacious, but founded in the height of *impudence*. They speculate on the charges incurred by the Proprietors, as if they were *partners in the firm*, on *equal terms*, and had a right to *equal profits*, as we shall clearly demonstrate. And when they allude, in a tone of *implied menace*, to the *suspension* of CHRISTOPHER RICH, they allude to a case not *in point*. COLLEY CIBBER could have informed them, that CHRISTOPHER RICH was superseded, not for introducing new and salutary regulations, but because he *swindled* the concern, and never *paid* his actors—a charge which, we believe, they cannot alledge against the present Proprietors of Covent Garden Theatre.

Again, they might have learnt from COLLEY CIBBER, that *Benefits* were *not* originally attached to the institutions of a Theatre. The first instance of

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the kind occurred in the case of *Mrs. Barry*, in consideration of her extraordinary merit. They were afterwards, at a considerable interval of time, adopted by *needy* Managers, who being *deeply in debt* with their Actors (a grievance of which the Performers of Covent-Garden Theatre have no right to complain), the latter had no other chance of recovering their arrears, but by taking the chance-profits of a Benefit Play.

We shall defend the Manager's conduct in *restricting* the issue of *Orders*, because, independent of *Orders* being an *indulgence*, not a *Right*, as we shall show in our next, we know that this indulgence has been *abused*, to the great detriment of the Proprietors.

We shall defend, and highly applaud, the *augmentation* of the Fine for refusing a character; not merely on the grounds stated in Mr. HUGHES's letter, that "much disgust has been given to Authors, and much injury sustained by the Property, by the rejection of characters,"—a topic on which we shall expatiate in its proper place—but because it requires very little penetration to perceive, that Performers, who write Plays, or follow any other lucrative occupations, as many of them do, may find it greatly to their *pecuniary* interest to pay the *old* fine of £.5, and thereby acquire sufficient leisure to realize £.100. Not to mention the ease and pleasure of taking £.12 per week, after the example of *one* of these very *mal-contents*, who

now

now feels himself aggrieved, that he cannot be the *Gentleman at large*, on such *easy* terms as formerly.

We shall *not* defend the *Sick Clause*, when arbitrarily, rashly, and oppressively enforced. But when, as in a *recent* instance (we will not *take oath* that the name of the party alluded to is to be found in the list of the *malcontents*), the announcement of its intended enforcement operates upon the *patient* with greater virtue and efficacy than even the potent wand of Æsculapius; when it possesses a charm to drive away sickness, and enables the man who has been indisposed a month, to "take up his bed, and walk," to the regular discharge of his duty the very next day—then, indeed, we must regard it in the light of a *blessing*, rather than an *evil*; and flatter ourselves, when rightly explained, none but the *Doctors* will grumble at the regulation. But in cases similar to that we have just stated, and in such cases *only*, will the *Manager*, we hope, feel inclined to enforce it.

☞ Correspondents are requested to transmit their communications, *post paid*, to the Editor, at W. JUSTINS's Printing Office, Pemberton Row, Gough Square, Fleet Street.